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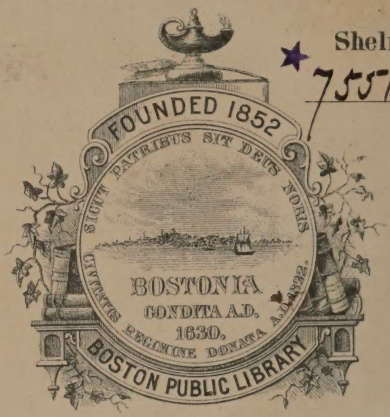

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The Pastor's Farewell Benediction.

29

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF BRAINTREE, MASS.,

JULY 2, 1871,

THE DAY FOLLOWING BEING THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SETTLEMENT, JULY 3, 1811,

BY

REV. RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:
MOSES H. SARGENT.

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Mrs. R. A. Nichols,
Oct. 18, 1893.

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SERMON.

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." — ROMANS xv. 33.

BELOVED BRETHREN, — Perhaps it is presumption, perhaps 'tis folly; but with no perhaps, 'tis strong pastoral affection, that prompts one more attempt to address a parting word to a congregation committed of heaven to my pastoral charge ten years beyond half a century ago! However inferior to the great apostle of the Gentiles in the graces of the Spirit, I can say truthfully with him, and more emphatically this day than ever before, "I have been with you, all these years, in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." To you and to myself alike, the evidence of physical and mental weakness is too clear to be questioned, and ought, perhaps, to seal these lips in silence for the passing hour; yet I wish once more, before leaving you and this vain world behind me, to declare the substance of the gospel that has been preached to you not only during the sixty years of my own ministry, but the one hundred and seventy-five of your distinct existence as a church and society. Nor can I do this better than in the letter and spirit of those inspired words of Paul, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

In this epistle, Paul had discussed the leading principles of the gospel with much earnestness; had clearly exposed the corruptions of humanity, the exceeding sin-

fulness of sin and its universal reign, man's moral impotence and dependence, God's absolute sovereignty, the vanity of human righteousness, the sole ground of justification through faith in Jesus' blood, and the certainty of perdition to unbelievers.

These are commonly regarded as "hard sayings," indicative of an unsympathizing heart; nay, they are often spurned, as conveying injurious views of God himself, and misrepresenting his boundless love and mercy. Nor is it to be wondered at, that, under such misconceptions of the divine character, men should denounce those who reiterate Paul's instructions, as being blind to God's excellence, and indifferent to man's happiness.

Many were the apostle's adversaries while he lived; nor have eighteen centuries uprooted the heart's enmity developed by his teachings. Many, too, who reverentially listened to his instructions, felt not the full force of his reasonings, and distrusted the spirit that gave them utterance, — though friends at heart, their minds were too weak to grasp the lofty themes on which he discoursed; and some still live, who, while they love the spirituality and devotion of the apostle, are lost in the depths of those sublime mysteries he delighted to unfold.

What things, however, are hard to be understood in this or others of his epistles, 'tis not difficult to discover the tenderness of his affection for all who loved Jesus Christ in sincerity; like his Lord and Master, he wept with those that wept, and rejoiced with those that rejoiced. "The God of peace be with you all" is the outbreathing of a soul that communes with heaven, and holds fellowship with whatever is lovely and pure on earth. It is the language of earnest prayer, poured into the bosom of God; prayer, not for personal friends, as such, but for as many as had imbibed the spirit of Christ, and

felt their need of consolation from above, in any age of the world. "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

The Lord is styled "the God of peace," because pre-eminently the Author of peace, —

I. In his relations to man;
II. In man's relations to himself;
III. In the relations of Christians, one to another;
IV. In the relations of the Church to the world;
V. In the relations of men to their fellow-men.

I. In his relations to man.

He is the former of his body, the father of his spirit, the preserver of his life; his lawgiver, ruler, and final judge. These relations are undeniable and unchangeable. Inwoven with them are manifold duties to be discharged on man's part, — all comprehended in the one great command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength."

This command, man has universally transgressed. He withholds the homage due to infinite perfection, the unreserved obedience claimed by divine authority, the cheerful submission owing to the sovereignty which challenges the right to establish laws and penalties, to kill and make alive, to wound and heal, at his pleasure. Such are God's claims on every intelligent creature,— claims never to be relinquished. But, in the language of demur and complaint, man says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" and adds, with Egypt's infatuated king, "I know not the Lord, nor will I obey him."

In his relations to God, then, man is a sinner: he overleaps his law, usurps his prerogatives, and denies the righteousness lying at the foundation of his government. Hence, God and man are at issue: what one justly de-

mands, the other refuses; what one loves and honors, the other abhors.

But both right and power belong to God. He will not be mocked, nor can he be overruled: man is in his hand, as clay in the hand of the potter; no resistance to his authority, nor opposition to his purposes, can override his determination to glorify himself, and maintain the integrity of his law! What, then, shall be done with the rebel? Justice cries, "Cut him down! why cumbereth he the ground?" Mercy pleads, "Forbear! destroy him not! a blessing is in him!"

Mercy prevails against judgment: righteousness and peace embrace each other. Overtures of pardon are made; terms of everlasting concord are proposed, and, if accepted, oblivion of the past is promised: besides, heaven, earth, and hell unite to pour forth motives, influencing to acceptance of the terms; and so simple are they, that the child can understand them! Repent of sin, believe on Christ, and be saved. Then, unconditional submission to God, giving him the heart's affections, and devoting to his service each intellectual and physical energy, are certainly involved in faith and repentance.

This, however, satisfies no demands of the violated law! It is no equivalent for injuries done by transgression; and, were such satisfaction claimed at the transgressor's hand, peace could never be established between man and his Maker. His condition would be forever hopeless.

Hence the question arises, How are these demands to be satisfied, and the equivalent rendered? The voluntary interposition and personal sacrifice of the Son of God alone answer the question. He hath broken down the middle wall of partition between God and man, and, in the language of the apostle, "made both one."

Through him we have received the atonement, for "He gave his life a ransom for us;" by self-surrender to the death of the cross, he proclaimed Jehovah's inflexible justice and boundless compassion, the readiness of God to save the repenting sinner, and his changeless purpose to destroy the persevering transgressor.

After the execution of the law's penalty on the "Well-beloved of Heaven," none can deny sin's evil nature, nor its legitimate fatal effects; nor can any one doubt God's infinite abhorrence of the accursed thing, when he inflicts the severest possible sufferings on his own Son, standing in the sinner's place. By that sacrifice, therefore, the majesty of the law is sustained, the glory of God's government secured, and the whole of his procedure with man, from the beginning down to the end of time, vindicated. Thus the foundation of peace between God and man was laid in the blood of Jesus, and God was manifested to the universe as the "God of peace."

II. In man's relations to himself.

"Great peace have they that love God's law, and nothing shall offend them;" a peace that passeth all understanding, assuring the heart before God, keeping the mind and heart through Christ Jesus, having "the testimony of conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world." It is an enduring peace, not dependent on outward circumstances; a peace that increases with revolving years, because nourished by daily communion with heaven; a peace that defies calamity, because based on the promise and oath of him who cannot lie; it is the more firmly rooted, like the mountain oak, by the play of the fierce winds amid its branches, and the more glorious, like Sinai's summit,

through the pealing thunders and forked lightnings bursting from the encircling storm-cloud; the nearer the approach of the last enemy, the faster it ripens into joy unspeakable, till at life's close it breaks forth in the triumphant song, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

Peace of conscience! peace of mind, amid the world's turbulence! Peace with God in the soul! Peace, inflowing with the brightening prospects of immortality! What blessedness it imparts, beyond all that the natural man hath seen, or his ear heard, or his heart conceived of! Thus balanced, and rich in its composure, the mind may contemplate, undismayed, the world-wide desolations of sin, the ravages of pestilence and war, the accumulated calamities of guilty nations, and even the scenes of final judgment!

Whence this peace, but from the overflowing grace of God? It has its life-spring in the great event which shrouded the heavens in darkness, rent in twain the veil of the temple, caused the earth to quake, called the dead from their graves, and proclaimed, "It is finished!" But though, on the ground of this wondrous propitiation for sin, pardon and eternal life are freely proffered, all had availed nothing, but for the forth-putting of that mighty power which wrought in Christ, and raised him from the dead. Forever had man remained dead in trespasses and sins, but for the same voice that called light out of darkness, crying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" Nothing short of the Almighty agency employed in the soul's regeneration carries forward the work, — sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience, pours fresh light on the understanding, gives additional clearness to revealed truth, and increases the strength of the new man, till

vigor is attained adequate to the defeat of every assailing foe, and the conquest of a peace, involving quietness and assurance forever. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," is the gracious promise that baffles the world, the flesh, and the devil, and matures the hope that maketh not ashamed.

"My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you," No illusion this. The promise is substance, 'tis the soul's aliment, — more, 'tis the feast of fat things; 'tis not "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty." Not God himself, from whose bosom the promised good flows, more really exists, than this blessing is surely pledged; for it conducts the deathless spirit into his presence where are pleasures forevermore.

III. In the relation of Christians one to another.

On Christ's disciples the duty is plain and urgent, to "follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another:" to this God hath called them, and solemnly are they bound to "be of one mind," and "live in peace;" on this condition the God of love is with them. Are they not brethren, having the same Father, and Elder Brother? Belong they not to the same "general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven?" Have they not peculiar, yet common, trials, hopes, conflicts, enjoyments, and destiny? To "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," should be the main endeavor of life. If the wisdom that is from above is first pure, 'tis then peaceable: in one body are they called, to "let the peace of God rule in their hearts, putting off all anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of the mouth." Such are authoritative injunctions from the throne of "the God of peace."

Of all who name the name of Christ, none are perfect in the mastery of their passions, words, or movements. Infirmity is the earthly inheritance of all: even when they would do good, evil is present. All Christian minds have not equal intelligence and vigor; all Christian hearts are not equally under control of holy principle; nor in all, have the instinctive affections equal strength and purity. Varieties of individual structure are numerous and strongly marked; as are, also, varieties of outward condition, education, and animal propensity. Were this better remembered, lowliness and meekness would be more widely exercised, and the intrinsic value of true religion more justly appreciated. But disciples of Christ too often forget that their brethren are still in the flesh, and that even an Elijah is subject to like passions as other men; that they are not to look for perfection so much as sincerity, but are to be gentle one to another, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children." Christians of different communities are differently instructed from infancy, fall under the influence of different customs, and form differing habits of thinking and action, — shall they love each other the less for these unavoidable differences? Moreover, they bear diverse names, arising from differing views of religious rites and ceremonies, differing interpretations of the mind of the Spirit, and differing prejudices for or against eminent individuals in the church, of ancient or modern days; one is for Paul, another for Apollos, and a third for Cephas: but, so long as they hold Christ to be their common Head, and cultivate the mind that was in him, should they love each other less for these differences? Says John Newton, "Though a man does not accord with my views of election, yet, if he give me good evidence that he is effectually called of God, he is my brother. Though he seem afraid

of the doctrine of final perseverance, yet, if grace enable him to persevere, he is my brother still. If he love Jesus, I will love him, whatever hard names he may be called by, and whatever incidental mistakes I may think he holds."

Now, is not this the vital spirit of Christianity, — a spirit that makes no brother an offender for a word, introduces no shibboleth as a test of piety, casts no man out of the synagogue for his preference of one form of sound words over another, or for his observance or neglect of a rite he deems not commanded? On the other hand, it pledges love and peace to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, whether their home be the city set on a hill, or the rude hut of the wilderness; whether robed in purple, or clothed in rags; whether they enjoy the seven-fold light of the sun, or are content to plod their way by the feebler light of the moon.

> "How blest the sacred tie that binds,
> In union sweet, according minds!
> How swift the heavenly course they run
> Whose hearts and faith and hopes are one!"

Of peace and love like this, God is the author; and whether Paul plant, or Apollos water, God giveth the increase of grace necessary to the final perfectness of the peaceful spirit.

IV. In the relations of the church to the world.

The church has ever been as "a little city, with few men in it," and is well compared to the gleaning grapes left in the vineyard, or the two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough of the shaken olive-tree. Were the whole church of true disciples cut off from the land of the living, the world's population would be but imper-

ceptibly diminished; nor can any other reason be assigned for its continued life than the mighty power of God, restraining the remainder of human wrath. 'Tis no more certain that the world is at enmity with God, than with every trace of God's image in the human soul. Christ said to his disciples, "The world hateth you," — for the same reason that it hated him, and the Father who sent him. As the world persecuted Christ, it hath persecuted his followers also; and long is the catalogue of those, who, like prophets and apostles, have had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments." But I need not tell you how the church hath bled at every pore, and "been tormented and afflicted," in every generation. And when for a season she hath had rest, — as on the accession of Christian emperors to the throne of pagan Rome, — errors have come in like a flood, laying waste the fair heritage of the Lord; the Spirit of Christ hath been grieved, and the spirit of the world hath gained the ascendent; sensuality and ambition have paid a forced homage to Christianity, and under her shadow have rushed into the fields she had conquered, sacrificing blood on her altars unscrupulously as paganism had ever done, — drawing the sword, and sheathing it as remorselessly in the bosom of innocence, as when the blood-stained hands of a Nero or Diocletian had grasped it. Hence

From infidel lips we sometimes hear of Christian persecution; but 'tis an anomaly, — a contradiction in terms. As Christ persecuted no man, — coming not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, — so his precepts forbid violence on the part of his followers, whether for conscience' sake or other reason, and demand forbearance, forgiveness of injuries, brotherly love, and kindness to the evil and unthankful. Such is the heaven-born genius of Christianity, — the spirit breathing through all divine communications to man!

Understand me not to say that no sincere disciple of Christ has ever persecuted his brother; for even men of eminence in love and virtue have sometimes fallen into gross inconsistences: but this I say, 'tis only the spirit of the world that persecutes; and if ever the Church, as a body, has been guilty of the offence, it has been through the agency of "the god of this world," pushing traitors into her high places, giving them the management of her treasures, and spurring them on to Judas-like deeds of treachery and blood. The true church has never been a persecutor, though individual Christians, trained up amid the influences of an apostate church, have sometimes been blinded by the glare of false principles, and led to dishonor the Saviour, by pursuing men to the death. But wicked men, bearing the Christian name, have oft unfurled the bloody flag, and filled the church with terror and desolation.

'Tis a melancholy fact that distracting divisions widely prevail throughout Christendom; that professed Christians war upon each other; that millions on millions have fallen victims to the frenzy of nominal followers of Christ; and that infidelity draws so many poison-tipped arrows from the quiver of a hypocritical faith, and hurls them so successfully against the cause of God. Yet the baseness that doth this, in defiance of truth, is obvious to the slightest observation.

Possibly, the tragic scenes of other days may again be enacted; days of trial and blasphemy may yet return: for it cannot be denied that civil and ecclesiastical despotisms struggle hard to maintain their ground, and reduce to vassalage every element of social and religious freedom. The conflict is earnest: the Lord of hosts only can control and decide it. For the future, however, we will not fear, since "more are they that be with

us than they that be with them," as said Elisha to his servant.

Now the Church enjoys comparative quietness; and the opposition she meets, however bold and rancorous, is no more than sufficient to keep her armor bright, and urge her onward in the path of bloodless conquest. The final victory is surely hers: already the sword of the spirit cleaves its way through opposing hosts, and adds many a lovely gem from year to year to the crown of One who hath sworn, "To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess." The God of peace is her defence, and suffers no enemy to devour, though many gape upon her with open mouth, thus warning her against the slumbers of other years, and admonishing to ever-glowing zeal and fidelity. Without serious interruption, she may now mature and execute plans of enlargement, scatter abroad the Lively Oracles, multiply indefinitely her living messengers of salvation, prepare and strengthen her defences against infidelity and superstition, and fortify herself against the vain imaginings and haughty violences of imbittered enemies.

V. In the relations of men to their fellow-men.*

"Wars and fightings," the offspring of human lusts, have never been unknown: always have they darkened the pages of the world's history, but not always have they equalled in number and ferocity those of the years before the flood, or thousands of years following it. "The God of peace" hath interposed, over and over again, to hush the strifes of contending nations, and give the world a breathing-spell from the conflicts of hell-born passions. The day is yet future, when —

* This and some succeeding parts of the discourse were omitted in the delivery, for want of time and strength.

"No more shall nation against nation rise,
Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
Nor fields with gleaming steel be cover'd o'er, —
The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more."

Though elements of strife everywhere exist, and more or less agitate men's bosoms, and here and there kindle into consuming flame, yet, held in check by salutary influences of policy, fear, or thirst for gain, the world has intervals of repose through the controlling might and wisdom of "the great Unseen," which demand grateful acknowledgment. Mighty men rush not into the arena of blood and carnage with the recklessness of darker periods, because of increased responsibility to public sentiment, and the multiplied hazards of losing possessions and honors already acquired. "The God of peace" has so ordered it that nations know each other better as the ages advance, and become more closely connected by ties of interest and honor, and emerge into clearer light than had blessed the world while yet the sails of commerce had not whitened every sea, nor the explorations of the traveller had revealed the wealth of distant climes, coming more directly, too, under the benign influences of the religion of Heaven.

Doubtless, "wars and fightings" will continue to disturb the human family, till the spirit of the gospel shall gain its destined ascendency in high places, and over the mass of the world's population: for, until men cease to be injurious, contention will not die out; nor will they cease to be injurious till they yield to the authority of the commands on which "all the law and the prophets hang;" nor will they yield to this authority till they receive the Bible as the word of the living God, and are taught to revere and love it by lips touched with a coal from Heaven's altar; nor will even these means of moral advance-

ment avail, unless accompanied by that exceeding greatness of power that wrought in Christ, and raised him from the dead.

> "His word is fix'd, his saving power remains:
> Thy realm forever lasts, thine own Messiah reigns!"

Through the gospel of his Son, "the God of peace" effectively teaches mankind that in Christ Jesus there is neither high nor low, rich nor poor, bond nor free, but that all are made of one blood, subject to the same perfect government, and accountable to the same impartial judge. These truths, so far as understood and believed, will dispel long-prevailing delusions in regard to the justice and policy of arguing questions of right and equity, of life and happiness, at the point of the sword, and confirm the conviction that nations cannot arbitrate questions of this nature, except in the spirit of kind forbearance, without coming in conflict with changeless principles of God's administration. And, when it comes to this, wars must cease, peace triumph, the wolf dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf, the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

Even a heathen could say, "Contention by violence belongs only to brutes: we punish murders and massacres committed among private persons, but glory in the crime of murdering whole nations." So much as this, of the absurdity of "wars and fightings," "the God of peace" teaches, by the law impressed on man's nature. Still more emphatic is the teaching of the gospel; for Christ saith, "Put up thy sword in its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." The early Christians, as we are told by Tertullian and others, regarded "any participation in war as unlawful for be-

lievers in Jesus;" "They took up the sword against no nation," but "for Jesus' sake became the children of peace." Nor is the saying of a renowned English statesman to be condemned, — "We cannot make to ourselves a more lively representation and emblem of hell, than by the view of a kingdom at war!" It includes, indeed, all crimes against humanity, every thing that can deform the character, or debase the name of man. Well, therefore, is it held "the greatest of human crimes."

But it may be objected, that the Lord is sometimes styled "a man of war." True, in the highly-figurative language of Hebrew poetry, he is represented as a mighty warrior, in accommodation to the imperfection of human conception; not that he delights in making war on the creatures of his power, or in the miseries thus induced on his enemies. As governor among the rebellious nations, he actually gives them blood to drink for their crimes, executes judgments on the guilty for the safety of the innocent, or vindicates the eternal principles of righteousness. He appears as a "man of war" when he overwhelms Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, overthrows the nations of Canaan, appoints Moab and Amalek to the sword, sends Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, Cyrus to dethrone Belshazzar, and the King of Grecia to overturn the Persian Empire. As a man of war he puts down one and sets up another, using good men or wicked men, as it pleaseth him, to carry out his purposes. Such is his prerogative, and such his aim, to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion.

But, though he rise up as in Mount Perazim, and be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work and maintain a just and beneficent government, it is yet his "strange work," and his bringing to pass the act, is "his strange act;" i.e. 'tis unlike him, — a thing to which

he is constrained, not by revengeful dispositions, but by man's wickedness. He is "the God of peace;" and, to secure peace on earth and throughout the intelligent universe, he must array himself in the panoply of war, gird his sword on his thigh, and ride forth in the cause of meekness.

This is his glory, — a glory that he giveth not to another; and whoever challenges the right to make war on his fellow-man assumes God's prerogative, usurps the throne, and will fall, like Lucifer, from his proud elevation. Surely the God of peace commands all men to break the sword into the plough-share, and the spear into the pruning-hook, and learn war no more, but to love as brethren, and diffuse the blessings of peace and beneficence over "the wide, wide world!"

Reflections.

1. We are taught sin's malignity. It is the destroyer of peace of conscience and peace with God; breaks up the harmony of mankind, and creates whatever of confusion and strife, of bickering and violence, afflicts the larger or smaller community; excites disastrous feuds among rival States and nations, arming them for deadly conflict; breaks up the great deep of human corruption, and lets in floods of calamity and woe, on the guilty and innocent alike; clothes the Almighty in robes of vengeance; compels him to bathe his sword in blood, and ride over the necks of his adversaries in defence of his throne; throws open the gateway of death, and hurries millions of victims, year by year, into that world where mercy and peace are known no more forever! Is this malignant enemy to be preferred in man's affections to "the God of peace"?

2. We are taught our own sinfulness. Universally, men have revolted from the God of peace: all are of one family with sinners before the flood, and are possessed of the same passions, and need the same restraints, as those of other generations who have sharpened their tongues, perverted their ways, and fretted against the Lord. In vain we plead innocence of such offences: for the germ of them all is within us; and if it bud, blossom, and mature not at once into full-ripe fruit, it is not because we differ in heart from the most profligate and perverse of any generation. "The thought of wickedness is sin;" from the envious eye and covetous desire spring the murder of Abel, the false accusation of Daniel, and the treacherous betrayal of Christ! Mercifully are restraints imposed on the heart's lustings, preventing their outbreak into flagitious crime! For these restraints, all praise is due, not to the integrity of man's heart, but the kind hand of "the God of peace."

3. None but lovers of peace can dwell with God. Since in his relations to man, in man's relations to himself, in the relations of Christians to each other, in the relations of the Church to the world, and of men to their fellow-men, he is manifested as "the God of peace," he must be the enemy of discord and confusion, and cannot receive men of antagonistic sentiments and principles to his communion. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God!" Such as seek peace and pursue it bear God's image: they have the mind of Christ, and sympathize with angels in their song of "Peace on earth, and good-will to men;" and, being in harmony with heaven, it shall be their home. But such as contend with God, despise his people, stifle conscience, and imbitter the lives of fellow-men, can find no society in the world above; and, not en-

tering through the gates into the city, are barred out, "with dogs, sorcerers, murderers, idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

4. The way to all peace is clear. Yield the heart to Christ; derive the spirit of love from the fountain-head of grace; and learn the way to the throne from the Bible only. Throw the soul, with all its interests, into the bosom of God; keep a conscience void of offence; cherish an undying love for Christ's followers; and aim, in every movement, to bless the world! Never lose sight of the relations God has established between the several members of his vast family; for all intelligences have one Father. As many as dwell on earth have a like entail of sickness and want, suffering and death; all hasten to a common home, and will soon lie side by side in the narrow house, whence, together, they shall come forth, at the call of the archangel's trump, to stand before the Son of man. Shall they now indulge the spirit of contention, and grudge one against another, when the Judge standeth before the door? Ah! such is the way to the "destruction that hath no covering." "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not." It is earthly, sensual, and devilish: where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. There is a wisdom from above, first pure, then peaceable. Whoever hath this shall dwell forever in the bosom of "the God of peace."

In conclusion, let me add,—

Long, very long (as we poor mortals count time), have we, my brethren, dwelt together under Heaven's indulgent eye, in comparative peace. We have had our difficulties and vexations, our personal strifes and social irregularities, — the sad results of sin, and of the infirmity

inherent in our common nature; but, through the grace of God, we have so far triumphed over these, that this day we are permitted to rear our altar to Jehovah Shalom.

One house of God after another we have seen removed, and others rising in their stead; one secession of families after another has occurred, in accommodation to the humors of an increasing and restless population; and five places of public worship now stand, where sixty years ago one sufficed to meet the spiritual demands of the whole community. But, whatever our views of changes like these, it cannot be questioned that the Holy Spirit hath descended upon us once and again, converting sinners, edifying saints, restraining the outbursts of vice, and strengthening the bonds of social order; and even now, while the ministry of many years droops and passes away, do we rejoice in precious tokens of God's special presence and wondrous workings, under the few months' ministry of our young and beloved brother,* rising in vigorous activity to new and glorious achievements." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake!"

We have sometimes heard the complaint from ministers, and not without reason, that their salaries are inadequate to their support, and are too reluctantly and irregularly paid. At some periods, this has been true of your own ministers, but not for the last sixty years.

We know too well, that many congregations are dilatory in their attendance at the sanctuary, and inattentive to the word preached; and even here may be found the occasional sleeper and the fair-weather worshipper: but drowsiness and inconstancy are not your most easily-besetting sins; and, in this respect, "Though ye have lien among the pots" (for such are poor sermons), "ye are

* Rev. E. P. Tenney.

yet as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

So, not unfrequently, has the complaint been heard, that ministerial character fails to meet with due respect, and ministerial services are not appreciated at their just value; and, doubtless, this is sometimes true: but never, I am persuaded, has it been true of this congregation, except in the case of those few members who are ignorant of the common proprieties of life, and lost to self-respect and public esteem.

Nor is it so rare as it ought to be, to hear the complaint that few or no tokens of love and sympathy are received by ministers, from those to whom their time and strength are earnestly devoted. In some instances, no doubt, the complaint is just, as alleged against individuals and congregations; and perhaps the fault is not wholly theirs, for ministers may possibly claim too much, as their people may bestow too little. In any event and at all times, however, I rejoice to bear record, that no such complaint can be brought against this congregation: in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in the fruition of sweetest pleasures and in the bereavement of all the heart holds dear on earth, the sympathies of your hearts have ever followed me and mine. Odors of sweet smell have regaled the senses; the music of voices attuned by heaven has fallen on the ear; and many a sacrifice, acceptable and well-pleasing to God, has cheered the habitation of your pastor. Verily, I am a debtor unto all men, but especially unto you, and the fathers that have gone before you, for the choicest earthly blessings that cheer the hearts of God's servants here below.

Pleasant as it would be to extend this train of reflection, and indulge in reminiscences of the past, my

strength will not permit it, nor could your patience endure it.

"Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Casting my eyes over this congregation, scarcely an individual, young or old, meets them who occupied a seat in this sanctuary sixty years ago! Those who called me to this pastoral charge, and listened attentively to the teachings of these lips, and sustained the labors performed with their substance and prayers, and especially those godly women who labored with me in the gospel, and soothed my often anxieties with their smiles, or kindly words, or sympathetic tears, — with scarce an exception are gone to the land of silence!

A stripling then, with scarce a sling and five small stones from the brook, the battle of the Lord had to be fought; and how grateful the faith and co-operation of those fathers and mothers in Israel words cannot tell! Sweet and precious are their memories still. How my heart loves them, and pants to meet them in that world where Jesus dwells!

Nor can I love the children — bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh — less than the parents who have left us. Years may whiten the head, cripple the limbs, dim the eyes, paralyze the tongue, and enfeeble the vital organs of your pastor; but the soul defies their power, and swells with deeper and sweeter emotion, as days and moments roll on with accelerating haste to reach the terminus of life's labors, toils, disappointing hopes, and sickening griefs!

What may I say more?

Assured that God is now in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, as ambassadors of Christ, and as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in

Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. So shall "the God of peace be with you all."

Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do. So shall "the God of peace be with you all."

Would you that Satan be bruised under your feet shortly, and his devices against Zion successfully resisted? Then unite with me in the prayer, "The God of peace be with you all."

Would you have peace among yourselves, and in all the churches? Then look constantly to Him who is not the author of confusion, but the God of order, and "the God of peace" shall be with you all! Or

Would you be wholly sanctified in spirit, soul, and body, and be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Then seek, evermore, "the God of peace," who can make you perfect in every good work, to do his will!

My days, though swifter than a weaver's shuttle, are not spent without hope; not the hope of protracted life and renewed energies, but the faint hope of a personal interest in the wondrous love of God; hope that his peace will ever abide with you, and your posterity after you; hope that we, who have worshipped together "the God of peace" here, shall love and praise him hereafter, on those heavenly hills where no discords are known, nor other disturbing influences felt, from the malign passions of earth or hell, while eternity endures!